The Attorney General of India in his opinion dated March 5, 2003 mentioned that the cost of R&R of the oustees has to be borne entirely by the State of Gujarat. While the Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra agreed with the opinion of Attorney General, the Government of Gujarat did not agree with it. Government of Gujarat desired to represent its case with the legal expert to Attorney General in this regard.

The Narmada Control Authority (NCA) while agreeing with the views of the Attorney General, also put on record the dissent note of Government of Gujarat and decided that Attorney General's opinion with the decision of NCA would be taken to the next RCNCA meeting for their consideration and decision.

The matter was discussed in the 12th meeting of RCNCA held on 9th September 2004 and it was decided that the Ministry of Law will be requested to allow a hearing to Government of Gujarat by the Attorney General for presenting their view point on the issue of sharing cost of R&R of SSP. If Attorney General desires, similar opportunity can also be provided to other party States. The reply of Attorney General along with the earlier opinion of the Attorney General will be considered in the future meeting of the RCNCA for a decision.

NABARD Loan to Farmers in M.P. and Chhattisgarh

†98. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether NABARD is providing loan to the farmers in Madhya Pradesh and Chattishgarh through State Governments; and.

(b) if so, the percentage of interest being charged by NABARD from the State Governments on the said loan?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) provides refinance to District Central Coop. Banks (DCCBs) and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) located in various States including Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh against crop loans disbursed by them to farmers. NABARD also provides refinance to commercial Banks, Coop. Banks and RRBs against their term loans provided under investment credit for agriculture and allied purposes, rural non-farm sector and rural housing.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

NABARD does not provide loans to farmers through State Governments. However, it provides loans to State Governments for share capital contribution to Cooperative Credit institutions at an interest rate of 8 % p.a. currently. Besides, it provides loans to State Governments for completion/creation of new infrastructure projects under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). The rate of interest presently charged by NABARD from the State Governments for the financial assistance provided to them under RIDF IV to VII is 7%, and the RIDF VIII to X is Bank Rate + 0.5% p.a. (currently 6.5%).

Linking of Major Rivers

*99. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Task Force appointed by the previous Government with regard to the linking of major rivers in India is still functional;

(b) if so, the latest status report with regard thereto;

(c) whether the Task Force has been able to achieve any breakthrough with regard to the major outstanding issues like ecological sustainability, technological feasibility and financial viability of the project; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Task Force on Interlinking of Rivers (TF-ILR) has held 16 meetings so far, the last one being on 5th October, 2004. As per its terms of reference, the Task Force has submitted Action Plan-I giving an outline of the time schedules for the completion of the feasibility studies, detailed project reports, estimated cost, implementation schedule, concrete benefits and advantages of the project etc. on 30.4.2003. Action Plan-ll giving alternate options of funding and execution of the project as also suggested methods for cost recovery has also been submitted by the Task Force in April, 2004.

(c) and (d) The Task Force has critically reviewed the interlinking of rivers (ILR) proposals and prioritized two links *viz.* Ken-Betwa and Parbati-KaHsirKtvChambal ureter Peninsular Component for preparation of detailed project reports (DPR). It also got prepared Terms of Reference (TOR) for preparation of DPRs to address all aspects including technological feasibility, scoo-economic and environmental impacts and financial viability.